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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 001300

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [VZ](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: MORE SWIPES AT U.S., BUT LITTLE
TRACTION FOR GOVERNMENT

REF: BUENOS AIRES 1287

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Argentine Justice Minister Fernandez stepped up his critique of the U.S. prosecution of Venezuelan Franklin Duran amidst signs that pro-Kirchner activists are also raising the volume against the USG. Even on increased volume, however, the GOA is adding little to its already weak defense as opposition politicians formally press for greater transparency and investigation into what transpired in the financing of Cristina Kirchner's presidential campaign. We continue to work with our counterparts throughout the GOA despite the distractions. Ambassador and Press Section have continued to stress independence of U.S. judicial process and the U.S. desire for good bilateral relations and our investment in those relations. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Minister of Justice Anibal Fernandez maintained the point for the Government of Argentina (GOA) September 15 in questioning the integrity of the ongoing U.S. federal prosecution of Venezuelan Franklin Duran in Miami. In a radio interview, Fernandez said "everything about the trial is irregular," belittling the professionalism of prosecutors Thomas Mulvihill and Alexander Acosta and asserting their prosecution of Duran was politically motivated, and again complaining that the United States had not agreed to extradite Antonini-Wilson (A-W) to Argentina. Along the same lines, red, white, and blue posters appeared September 16 around Buenos Aires with the legend "Bush: Hand over the fugitive Antonini Wilson." The posters bear the insignia of the Kirchnerist "Movimiento Evita" led by prominent piquetero Emilio Persico, who claimed on television talk shows September 15 that the Miami trial was part and parcel of the same alleged U.S. interventionism that sought to destabilize regimes in Bolivia and Venezuela. (Note: Poster campaigns like this one are widely assumed to be the handiwork of Casa Rosada operatives.)

¶3. (C) There are other indications of support from official quarters for a jeremiad against the United States. In the September 15 edition of "El Argentino," a newspaper that started production at Nestor Kirchner's behest in reaction to what he considered the private media's anti-government bias, a full-page article blames Bolivian unrest exclusively on the United States. The author attributed the current situation in Argentina's northern neighbor to what it called massive CIA investments, a U.S. Ambassador who "specializes" in the partition of countries, and U.S. cultivation of local "fascists." Linkage of the Miami trial with Bolivian unrest (i.e., in a coordinated USG "conspiracy" against "popular" South American regimes) was also a central motif of the anti-U.S. protesters who serenaded the Embassy for two hours on September 12.

Argentine Judicial Inquiry Hears Ledesma

¶4. (U) Lawyer and former Argentine judge Guillermo Ledesma testified on September 15 before investigating judge Daniel Petrone that he was not sent to meet with A-W in Miami as a representative of the Kirchners or to promise A-W immunity in Argentina. He did confirm that A-W had told him the valijagate suitcase belonged to former Highway Tolls Commissioner Claudio Uberti, and that A-W had said he was at the Casa Rosada presidential palace in Argentina two days after his August 4, 2007, airport interception (a claim the government continues to deny). Moreover, he said, A-W claimed that Uberti and Planning Minister Julio de Vido had assured him at Casa Rosada that they would take care of him.

¶5. (U) Judge Petrone told the press he had sent several requests to both Venezuelan and U.S. counterparts. From Venezuela, he said, he was awaiting information about the roles of Venezuelan oil company PDVSA Vice President Diego Uzcategui and his son Daniel Uzcategui. He had declared them both in violation of a court order for not appearing before his court and had requested an international arrest warrant for their capture. He also was seeking information about PDVSA finances that might be related to the USD 800,000. From the United States, Petrone said he had requested information on the actual U.S. currency involved in the transaction, certified copies of the tape recordings and transcripts being presented at the Miami trial, and A-W's extradition to testify in Argentina.

¶6. (U) Also making news in Argentina are reports in newspaper "Clarín" that A-W's lawyer Theresa Van Vleit has said her

client wishes to testify before Argentine authorities investigating the case after the U.S. trial, either in Argentina or the United States.

Opposition Requests Campaign Finance Investigations

¶7. (U) At least two formal requests for judicial inquiries into the Kirchners' Victory Front campaign were put before judges in Argentina on September 15. Attorney Ricardo Sans asked electoral judge Maria Servini de Cubria to investigate the possible receipt of illegal foreign financing for the Cristina Kirchner campaign. Separately, Patricia Bullrich and two other leaders of the opposition Civic Coalition called for an investigation into A-W's meetings with Ledesma and Franklin Duran in Miami as evidence of an effort by the Kirchner government to cover up the source and destination of the money.

Comment: Business, Not Quite as Usual

¶8. (C) Septel will report a constructive meeting September 15 (planned two weeks in advance) between Ambassador and Minister of Defense Nilda Garre, suggesting that, at least to this point, the GOA is not seeking to downgrade the bilateral relationship even as some of its Cabinet members continue to question the integrity of the Miami trial, allege political motivations behind it, and criticize perceived delays in extraditing A-W. The Ambassador also had a cordial meeting September 17 with the pro-Kirchner Vice Governor of Buenos Aires Province. The Americas Desk Officer at the MFA told Pol Off on September 12 that their approach in the Office of North American Affairs was to push forward with preparations for the next round of bilateral consultations, November 12 in Washington. Still, pro-Kirchner activists are giving increasingly heated attention to alleged U.S. interference in Bolivia and to the "politicized" trial in Miami, perhaps using the government's current difficulties as an opportunity to push it farther to the left. President Kirchner's balancing act will become increasingly difficult, and the accusations being leveled at her by the opposition and media are again taking a political toll. Ambassador and Press Section have continued to emphasize the independence of the

U.S. judicial system and the enormous investment the U.S. has made since January to work productively with the government of President Fernandez de Kirchner. End Comment.

WAYNE